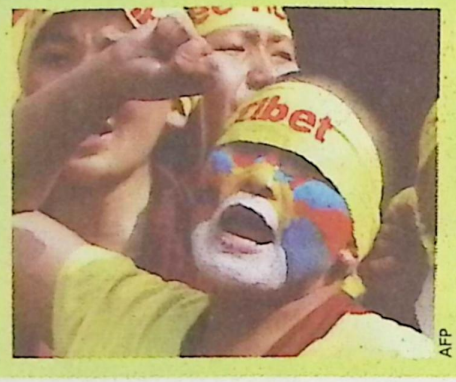


AFP

Dozens killed as Tibetan protests spread

Anti-China protests begin on March 10 in Lhasa and gradually escalate, spreading to Tibetan communities in neighbouring Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai provinces. Dozens are reported dead within days. China says 13 people were killed in riots in Lhasa, while the Tibetan government-in-exile says at least 99 people died in the crackdown by Chinese troops. China does not allow foreign journalists into Tibet, but witnesses report that Chinese security forces sealed off towns in areas of unrest. The UN, Europe, and US call on Chinese to use restraint. China accuses Tibetan leader-in-exile the Dalai Lama of leading the protests.

Pakistan parliament elects first woman speaker

Pakistan's National Assembly elects its first woman speaker on March 19. Fehmida Mirza is a member of assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) which won elections in February, and her husband is a close friend of Benazir's widower Asif Ali Zardari who became chairman of PPP after his wife was killed in December. Mirza, 51, a medical doctor from a political family from Sindh province, defeats the candidate from the main party that backs President Pervez Musharraf by an overwhelming majority.


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Week-long Andean crisis grips Latin America

A diplomatic crisis in the Andean region develops into the worst political row for years after Colombian troops cross into Ecuador in a raid on Farc rebels. Venezuela and Ecuador cut diplomatic ties with Columbia and send troops to their borders, while the Organisation of American States (OAS) agrees that Bogota violated Ecuador's sovereignty in carrying out the raid that left at least 20 of Colombia's Farc rebels dead.

The presidents of Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia shake hands on March 8, at a regional Rio Group summit, marking the end of the week-long crisis, though regional tensions remain.

US economy loses No. 1 spot

The US loses the title of "world's biggest economy" to the euro-zone in March as the value of the dollar slumps to record lows. The combined GDP of the 15 countries which use the euro overtakes that of the United States when the European currency surges to a new high against the dollar at the start of the month (1.00 = $1.56). Meanwhile, the US credit crisis and economic decline continues to create turmoil in global markets and the US Federal Reserve is forced to take measures it last resorted to during the Great Depression.



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